



Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee Minutes

Date: May 20th, 2020

Time: 7:15PM

Location: Via Zoom conference

Attendees: *Executive committee:* Christopher Tonkin (chair), Doug Greenfield, Jack Johnson, Muris Kobaslija, Doug Mayo-Wells, Adam MacNeill, Scott Smith
Town of Arlington: Daniel Amstutz

David Creedon, Anne Dinoto, Linda Epstein, Philip Goff, Rod Holland, Galen Mook, Alison Piasecki, Judith Proctor, Thomas Proctor, Steve Revilak, Brian Ristuccia

1. Introductions, Ground rules

Executive committee roll call:

Doug Greenfield, present

Jack Johnson, present

Muris Kobaslija, present

Doug Mayo-Wells, present

Adam MacNeill, present

Scott Smith, present

Christopher Tonkin, present

From the Town of Arlington:

Daniel Amstutz, present

Meeting opens with review of emergency remote public meeting guidance consistent with Governor Baker's executive order of March 12th, 2020: The Governor's order suspends the requirement of Open Meeting Law to have all meetings in a public and accessible location. Public meetings may meet entirely remotely as long as the public can access the meeting. Committee secretary Doug Mayo-Wells is taking minutes; the meeting is being recorded for the purposes of verifying the minutes; and the recording will be deleted after the minutes are approved.

Participants are invited to introduce themselves and affiliation, if any:

David Creedon, resident, bike commuter

Anne Dinoto, resident (in neighborhood of May 5th bike/motor vehicle crash in which cyclist Charlie Proctor was fatally injured)

Linda Epstein, resident (in the neighborhood of the crash)

Philip Goff, founder, co-chair, East Arlington Livable Streets Coalition

Rod Holland, ABAC member at large

Galen Mook, executive director, MassBike

Alison Piasecki, cyclist involved in crash

Judith Proctor, Charlie Proctor's mother

Thomas Proctor, Charlie Proctor's brother

Steve Revilak, resident, East Arlington bike commuter

Brian Ristuccia, resident

2. Previous meeting minutes approval

Not ready for review, deferring to next month

3. COBWEB

(Cops On Bikes With Education for Bicyclists)

No officer present for this meeting

Trying to coordinate with Corey Rateau, others to establish more regular COBWEB participation in ABAC meetings

4. TAC report

(Transportation Advisory Committee)

TAC met on 19 May. Scott Smith provides a report on the meeting and background/context for the benefit of members of the public who may not be familiar with TAC.

TAC was founded in 2000 to address on-road traffic safety and mobility. Pedestrian, bicycle, and motor vehicle crashes are all of concern. TAC was heavily involved in East Arlington and Arlington Town Center redesign efforts. TAC is a volunteer committee, and responds to requests from the Selectmen – scope of requests varies from "stop sign needed" to major studies.

Mr. Smith notes that Officer Rateau is on the TAC, but was unable to attend on the 19th. TAC has not as yet received a formal request to investigate the fatal crash of May 5th, but expects a request to be forthcoming. Discussion with 5 citizens including residents who live very nearby, and a family member who witnessed the crash provided valuable context.

TAC is aware that the crash location at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue, Appleton St & Appleton Pl is problematic. CTPS (Central Transportation Planning Staff) of the MPO (Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization) performed an audit of the intersection in 2012. The recommendations of the study were expensive (changes to road geometry), and the Town focused on other improvements. In the intervening period, minor improvements were made (new signal head installed, crosswalk realignment), and the intersection experienced fewer crashes, so the priority of addressing the recommendations of the CTPS study dropped until the tragic crash of May 5th. Mr. Smith noted that in the years between 2013 and 2018, the intersection did not experience an exceptionally high number of crashes.

A helmet-cam video of a near miss experienced by Steve Revilak was shared with TAC.

TAC has many ideas of how to address the concerns. It is a busy intersection, with an odd geometry, a pedestrian signal that does not work well. The proximity to Ottoson school is an additional complicating factor.

TAC is standing by for an anticipated request to convene a working group.

5. Discussion of May 5th fatal crash

One data point: Arlington police department closed Massachusetts Avenue to conduct a full scale recreation of the crash and take measurements.

Galen Mook of MassBike wonders how ABAC fits in with the discussions with the Town, TAC. He suggests there may be an opportunity to apply some treatments to the intersection as soon as possible pending a more permanent solution. He also proposes a memorial white bike at the site, as was installed in Lexington last year to memorialize Terry Coover. He is working with the Town/DPW on this and emphasizes the importance of a memorial artifact, since a memorial event cannot be held due to COVID-19 restrictions on social gatherings.

Phil Goff of EALS shares a proposal for short-term remediation. Vehicle speed, sightlines and complexity of the geometry (wide triangle of pavement due to angle at which side streets intersect Mass ave) are all problems – a permanent solution will take a study/time/funding. Therefore he proposes a low-cost striping project, can be implemented with minimal study, get safety improvements onto the streets in months vs. years, with limited impact to parking.

Observed that although Appleton is perhaps the most serious problem especially where the bike lane drops, the entire stretch of Mass Ave from bounded by Richardson/Dunkin Donuts on the west and Burton/Forest streets on the east is problematic. However, dangers of Appleton are increased to the curve of Mass Ave, a bus stop reducing visibility, and a sharp downgrade for eastbound traffic increasing velocity.

Adding green pavement markings and signage will enhance visibility. Mr. Goff's plan also eliminates 20 parking spaces, although half of these are adjacent to industrial properties, no local business should be impacted. Ballpark cost should be 25-30K\$ for striping and signs. Important to note that this does not solve all the problems.

Need to do public outreach and commission an engineering study for a permanent solution that can include elements like changes to road geometry, signalization changes, constructing median islands, etc.

Jack Johnson has seen the CTPS study, and lives in the neighborhood. He notes that shallow angle intersections with Forest and Lowell streets result in hazards to westbound cycle traffic similar to the hazard of Appleton St/Pl for eastbound cycle traffic, and proposes expanding the scope of striping to include the entire region. The laundromat at Forest has experienced repeated vehicles crashing into it, indicating that this stretch of road is also a problem for motor vehicle traffic (and motorists may also benefit from lane indications/signage).

Scott Smith thanks Phil for his efforts. He also conducted some observations in response to Brian Ristuccia's email about speeding issues. Noticed both motorists and cyclists travelling faster than 25mph eastbound (and downhill). Bikes traveling nearly at same speed as cars contributes to moving blindspot issue as seen on the video Steve Revilak shared with TAC. He observes that he usually takes the full lane on the eastbound approach to Burton, for better visibility. Is bike lane signage aimed at slowing cycle traffic, and will it push cyclists too far to the right for them to have good visibility?

Phil Goff indicates that concerns about visibility do not negate the need for a clear indication of where bikes should be – a cyclist still has the legal right to take the lane if necessary, but only experienced cyclists may be comfortable with this. A dashed line will help. Pavement markings should also increase motorist awareness.

Scott Smith suggests a "left turn must yield sign" for which there is some precedent, or installing a speed trailer to encourage slower speeds for eastbound traffic.

David Creedon wonders if "dangerous intersection" signage might be appropriate.

Daniel Amstutz clarifies that this was raised at TAC meeting but this specific signage is no longer being installed; it is too vague (no indication as to nature of hazard or what driver should do).

David Creed wonders if "caution" or "slow" signs would be helpful.

Linda Epstein observes that pavement markings are helpful. As a 20-year commuter she has had numerous near misses. She observes that the bus stop on Mass Ave just west of Appleton impacts visibility for westbound traffic turning left onto Appleton. Westbound traffic turning left is trying to beat the cars (being aggressive), and being behind a bus means the driver can't see

the bike and vice versa. She also mentions vehicle traffic from Appleton onto Mass Ave frequently not coming to a full stop. She also mentioned that for westbound cycle traffic, vehicles overtaking cyclists and turning left in front of them is a frequent problem both at Lowell and Forest sts, pavement striping would help there as well.

Judith Proctor thanks Phil Goff for his plan. Not a resident, she is curious as to whether the intersection signal blinks yellow in all directions at all times.

Scott Smith explains it is one of the older pedestrian signals in Town, meant to turn red to get a pedestrian across Mass ave, but blinking yellow/red for traffic.

Judith observed all yellow blinking lights, which was confusing.

Daniel Amstutz says that when the pedestrian signal is not activated, lights are flashing yellow for all Mass Ave traffic, flashing red for Appleton (effectively like a stop sign for Appleton). When the pedestrian signal is activated, the lights turn red for *all* vehicle movements (to permit pedestrian crossings).

Judith Proctor advises that this needs more consistent direction, like a stop to go left up Appleton or a green straight arrow to clarify.

Steve Revilak is a bike commuter, takes Mass Ave eastbound on home commute, has had two incidents over the last few years, at this intersection. One a collision with no injury or damage, one a near miss with video (available to ABAC members to review on request). In each case the other driver was westbound vehicle turning left onto either Appleton Place or Appleton Street. Shares Scott Smith's concerns about visibility, westbound driver cannot see cyclist behind car. Mr. Revilak appreciates the quick fix proposal, but thinks the westbound traffic turning left onto Appleton needs to be slowed. He adds his condolences to the family.

Roderick Holland has a lot of experience with this intersection. Of the 4 approaches to the intersection only one is uphill, so cyclists are input into the intersection rapidly compared to other intersections. Agrees with visibility concerns for eastbound traffic.

Adam MacNeill wants to relay a message from Evan Johnson that he also had a very close call eastbound, two days after the May 5th accident. Mr. MacNeill suggested that Mr. Johnson contact the committee. He also adds his condolences to the family.

Doug Greefield asks if it is possible to review the CTPS plan, as it may guide longterm solution.

Daniel Amstutz advises that the document is attached to the town calendar for this meeting <https://www.arlingtonma.gov/home/showdocument?id=51294>

Brian Ristuccia observes the few cyclists take the lane eastbound, it offers the most visibility, but few riders have the confidence to do this. So essentially westbound traffic onto Appleton is unprotected across two lanes of traffic (motor vehicle + bike lane). Vehicles act as a moving screen to hide bicycle traffic, so even motorists who actively look may not be able to see a bike before they start their turn. Pavement striping will help, but need to prevent people from making that left turn at speed. (If the car is traveling 30mph, a collision will likely be fatal.) Maybe quick-build curb extension or center divider or temporary left turn prohibition (while COVID is reducing traffic volumes). Ultimately (when intersection is signalized) the left turn needs to be protected only. Need to protect people from the consequences of mistakes while we wait for real signal, real geometric changes. (Intersection geometry may date to 1920s).

Christopher Tonkin agrees, wide expanse of pavement encourages turn at unsafe speed. Forest and especially Lowell have similar issues, too much tarmac.

Muris Kobaslija asks if there are studies to understand the potential impact of a left turn prohibition at Appleton? Either in short term or long term.

Christopher Tonkin notes Could force traffic to turn at park. After Covid, need access to church, school, from Appleton.

Brian Ristuccia notes that Park/Appleton has also been raised as a concern to TAC.

Linda Epstein agrees that left turn prohibition is worth exploring, but may be difficult, motorists want to avoid Mass Ave/Park street and Trader Joe's intersection. But may be possible to direct motorists to turn left earlier rather than later?

Christopher Tonkin observes that this will take more study.

Scott Smith notes that the alternate routes to Appleton (turn left on Daniels or Richardson) may also be problematic (small streets, parking on both sides).

Muris Kobaslija wonders if there are center dividers in Town as Mr. Ristuccia suggested (to force cars to turn at sharper angle/reduce speed).

Scott Smith says, yes, Summer street between Grove and Oak Hill Rd has islands, left turn lanes, mainly to protect the crosswalk. Left from Summer to Oak Hill road has some geometric similarities.

Jack Johnson notes that CTPS study from 2012 considered left turn prohibition on Appleton, but recommended a protected left instead. Driving traffic to Park adds more traffic for another unprotected left, need to consider holistically.

Christopher Tonkin agrees and adds that Park intersection is further complicated by stores, parking.

Doug Greenfield asks if barrels could be used as a temporary fix to mimic the geometric changes proposed in the CTPS study. Might affect Appleton Place approach.

Brian Ristuccia suggests that moving the westbound bus stop to the west side of the Appleton intersection could create enough space for a left turn lane.

Scott Smith advises that current trend is somewhat toward placing bus stops after intersections, reduce risk of people crossing in front of bus, easier for signal priority. Certainly worth considering.

Christopher Tonkin suggests we should try to synthesize something out of this take to next level.

Phil Goff observes that discussion reinforces that this intersection is complex, lots of issues, needs study. But the Town needs to do something in the short term, this summer, similar to the proposal. Need a two-phase approach so it doesn't take years before something happens.

Scott Smith noted that ABAC is an advisory committee to the Select Board. To get action, Arlington voters should write directly to the Select Board.

Christopher Tonkin asks if the Committee should we have a motion to draft letter to Select Board recommending a two-phase approach?

Galen Mook indicates that Massbike is happy to be part of any recommendation to town. Town has acted quickly and effectively in past, e.g., Bus/bike lane on Mass Ave. Wonders about role of TAC/ABAC, and where in the Town the asks need to go.

Scott Smith clarifies that TAC and ABAC are peer committees, will likely be a joint working group of both committees to tackle engineering work.

Jack asks, Better joint letter from ABAC/TAC or separate?

Daniel Amstutz advises that most effective thing would be a letter from ABAC, jointly with Massbike or not, in addition to Town residents writing to select board members.

Rod Holland wonders why the barrier to a full traffic light is?

Scott Smith indicates that this should be on the table, but a high cost option and difficult to accomplish in short term.

Rod Holland raises the question of liability exposure on the Town's part (negligence).

Thomas Proctor advises that the family has contacted lawyers, Town has limited exposure.

Brain Ristuccia says liability limit of municipalities is low and the burden of proof [for negligence] is high, so municipalities are effectively almost immune from such claims.

Phil Goff adds that fatality at Inman intersection impelled the City of Cambridge to implement quick remediation and develop a long term solution, so Arlington may be able to follow a similar path.

Christopher Tonkin moves that ABAC write a memo to select board recommending they take immediate action, possibly based on Phil Goff's plan as an initial fix, and then look at a long-term fix for all three intersections (Forest, Appleton, Lowell), with a copy to TAC.

Scott Smith asks that the scope of the memo be extended east to also cover Quincy St., based on recent crash data.

Scott Smith seconds the motion. Clarifies that we will copy TAC rather than issue joint letter.

Christopher Tonkin takes a roll call vote:

Doug Mayo-Wells: Yes

Adam MacNeill: Yes

Muris Kobaslija: Yes

Scott Smith: Yes

Doug Greenfield: Yes

Jack Johnson: Yes

Christopher Tonkin: Yes

SO VOTED: (7-0)

Phil Goff suggests that if remediation includes extending the bike lane to Quincy Street, it should go all the way to Brattle St. to avoid a two-block gap in the bike lane. He notes that EALS will also be doing a similar letter.

Galen Mook is also happy to contribute. He raises the question of a memorial, no clear protocol. Often referred to as ghost bikes, these serve two purposes, to raise awareness of safety concerns and to aid in the grieving process and memorialize the deceased. Wants to work with town to ensure memorial does not block traffic, etc.

Christopher Tonkin notes that there is a memorials committee in town, they would need to approve official memorial.

Muris Kobaslija indicates his support of such a memorial.

Thomas Proctor says that since in-person memorial services are difficult, a physical memorial is helpful.

Doug Mayo-Wells moves that we draft a statement supporting installation of memorial to Charlie Proctor.

Christopher Tonkin seconds.

Christopher Tonkin takes a roll call vote:

Jack Johnson: Yes, notes that Galen has spoken to family and the family is in favor

Muris Kobaslija: Yes

Adam MacNeill: Yes

Doug Mayo-Wells: Yes

Doug Greenfield: Yes

Scott Smith: Yes

Christopher Tonkin: Yes

SO VOTED: (7-0)

Danial Amstutz suggests contacting select board or Town Manager rather than memorials committee as this request is rather unusual

6. Shared Streets Pilot

Daniel Amstutz, week-long pilot is in progress. There were a number of requests, including from EALS, about making more spaces for people to walk/bike, especially with social distancing requirements. Ideas included expanding sidewalks on Mass Ave. Public Works department did not support this particular approach. Secondary approach inspired by work in Oakland CA, Seattle WA etc shutting streets to through traffic so people can walk/bike and car traffic is slowed. Had more support from Town. Team from Neighborways Design (including Arlington resident Jessica Martel had some funding for shared streets work. Identified Brooks and Varnum as good candidates (many kids, proximity to bikeway). Flyered neighborhood 95% positive response, conducted network analysis, took to Select Board on Monday May 13 and got approval, and installed May 15 with support from Public Works.

On Select Board agenda for June 1st to discuss phase 2.

Muris Kobaslija expresses strong support. Hopes this persists beyond Covid-19.

Doug Mayo-Wells concurs.

Adam MacNeill reminds the committee that he had been authorized in previous meeting to write to Town Manager in support of shared streets initiative, this was well received.

Scott Smith notes that many people are treating every street as a local street, happening sanctioned or not! Question as to whether Brooks is impacted as a detour for the bikeway if the traffic light installation at Lake Street requires bikeway closure.

Daniel Amstutz advises that data will be collected to ensure that Brooks is not overloaded/crowded as a result. He notes that this is both a public health response to immediate situation but also an opportunity to define "new normal" for neighborhoods after COVID-19.

Galen Mook mentions that this is going on in other communities. Massachusetts has 351 municipalities. DCR was proactive in Open Streets conversations, to limit parking at attractive places. Brookline was first to open streets around grocery stores, pharmacies, etc. Also need to focus on elder communities (hardest hit). Now seeing phase 3 with Arlington, Malden, Newton, Somerville, starting or exploring neighborhood streets as a "pressure valve" for cooped up people. Boston proper is moving more slowly. Galen thinks it is great that Arlington is making it easy for people to nominate their own neighborhoods and advises there are concerns about Waze, cut-through traffic. Recommends approaching from economic development perspective and benefits for business district — claiming parking lane space for retail expansion, curbside retail, restaurants. Finally, maybe concerns about changing ordinances for retail. Also advises to not preclude a temporary protected bikeline network.

Daniel Amstutz advises that conversations about sidewalk/outside dining, limited capacity for restaurants and implications for shared streets, use of parking spaces are ongoing.

Adam MacNeill will take some questions about permanent reallocation of space devoted to cars offline, given limited time.

7. Connect Arlington/Sustainable Transportation Plan

Daniel Amstutz asks if everyone has gotten the survey? Plan to keep survey up through June. Still figuring out engagement strategy, June 8th forum cannot take place.

8. Bike Friendly Community

Application still due in August as far as we know (no schedule changes as a result of COVID-19)

Daniel Amstutz is still planning to ask the Committee for help with some sections of the application.

9. Arlington High School rebuild

Work has started, nothing bicycle-specific to report at this time.

10. CPA funds

Per Christopher Tonkin, Charlie McCabe was not able to attend tonight's meeting, but we did get some funding, there are opportunities to apply for more funding later in the year and he is happy to help the Committee.

Daniel Amstutz advises the 20K\$ was recommended for engineering bikeway study that can address things like lighting, widening. Because Town Meeting is delayed, relevant votes are delayed, but should still be on the agenda.

11. Bike Counts

Daniel Amstutz if the community is interested in a particular location, there is a lot of biking going on, could be interesting to count on Mass Ave. Observed 60/hr in mid April as part of City hall sideway, double what was recorded 4 years ago. Need to follow social distancing protocol, everyone bring their own sheet. Automated counter is counting bicycles fine, pedestrian count is unreliable and vendor Ecocounter is unable to fix due to travel restrictions.

Christopher Tonkin agrees that collecting data would be interesting, many possible locations, Mass Ave near the center, Mass Ave near Lake Street, Mass Ave at Cambridge line, or even Broadway.

Scott Smith observed traffic in Arlington Center for 15 minutes in the late afternoon, between Rt. 60 and Swan Place: 36 pedestrians, 43 bikes, 2/3 with masks.

Rod Holland is interested in split between Minuteman/Mass Ave. Has previously observed a 6/2 split in favor of Bikeway, has become more equal.

Christopher Tonkin recommends off-line discussion to finalize plans.

12. Liaison with DPW

Nothing new to report with DPW.

However Christopher Tonkin has 6 convex mirrors and wonders if they could be mounted near Gold's Gym to help with blind spot.

Doug Mayo-Wells observes that correct positioning for lines of sight can be tricky.

Rod Holland supports and will help with line of sight testing.

13. Annual social

Defer until more is understood about recovery.

14. Tour of Arlington

Christopher Tonkin thinks it would be good to do when safe, haven't done in a while.

Muris Kobaslija observes that a socially distanced ride may be feasible as Massachusetts progresses through reopening phases.

Daniel Amstutz suggests providing maps for self-guided solo tour as an alternative.

Christopher Tonkin suggests picking a half day, having people stationed at points of interest to provide explanations as people arrive.

15. Warrant for bikeway hours change

Will not be taken up in June, given that Town Meeting will address financial articles only
Followup is not yet scheduled.

16. Other business

None

Scott Smith makes motion to adjourn

(Adjourned)